VIEWS

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America's Fluoridation Experiment

Part I: "Scientific" Investigation

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Fluorine is the name given to a pale yellow, highly reactive gas. When the element fluorine reacts with one or more other elements, compounds are formed that have properties quite different from the original elements constituting them. A certain class of compounds are termed "ionic." The fluorine in those ionic compounds is usually given the name "fluoride," to specify that the fluorine is now in combined form.

Fluoridation is the controlled addition of a fluorine-containing ionic compound (like sodium fluoide or hydrofluosilicic acid) to the public water supply, in order to raise the total fluoride ion concentration to about 1 ppm (one part fluorine by weight per million parts of solution by weight). According to the United States Public Health Service (USPHS), which is the main force behind fluoridation in this country, this will give people 1 milligram to 1.5 milligrams of fluoride per day, the "optimal daily dosage." Fluoridation is supposed to result in a 60-75 per cent reduction in the tooth decay occurring in youngsters six to fourteen years old.

It is instructive to compare fluoridation with chlorination of the public water supply. Chlorine gas is added to the water for the purpose of killing germs which otherwise might give people diseases or poison them. In the absence of chlorination, the water itself would be dangerous and cause human suffering. But in the absence of fluoridation, the water would cause no harm, it would presumably just not help some people. In the first case, we have purification, a proper public health measure; in the second, medication; or, more specifically, forced mass medication, on a scale unparalleled in United States history. And although both fluorine and chlorine belong to the same group in the table

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of the elements--the halogens--their properties are so different that, as far as their biological effects are concerned, no comparisons can be drawn at all.

Fluoride is a poison, almost as deadly as arsenic. The usual lethal dose, taken in the form of sodium fluoride, is approximately 2.3 grams (0.08 ounces). Fluoridation gives a man who consumes two quarts of water almost one thousandth of the lethal dose, 1.9 milligrams.

There are two general types of poisoning: acute and chronic. Acute poisoning occurs moments after the poison is ingested, usually as soon as it reaches the bloodstream. In chronic poisoning, where small doses are ingested over long periods of time, an insidious process degenerates a part of the body over many weeks, months or years. The real danger in fluoridation, as we shall see later, lies in its long-range chronic effects, though cases of acute poisoning have been reported.

Fluoridation does *not* purify or disinfect the water, nor has anyone ever shown any bodily need for fluoride, even in trace amounts. The sole purpose of fluoridating drinking water is to decrease the incidence of tooth decay among children. And though its proponents do not claim that this anti-cavity effect lasts into adulthood, the smaller probability of an adult incurring a cavity means, allegedly, that fluoridation will save many children forever from the extra discomfort or anguish they might have felt in having more of their teeth drilled or extracted by the dentist.

In order to prove this benefit of fluoridation, epidemiological studies have been applied. Epidemiology is defined by I. R. Campbell as a "procedure employed in the study of a disease . . . as a mass phenomenon in contrast to the clinical method.

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The population, rather than the individual, is the unit of investigation." (Campbell, *The Role of Fluoride in Public Health*, The Kettering Laboratory, p. 52) But the basic standard of physical health is the life of the individual human being.

An epidemiological proof consists of showing that, on the average, a certain effect is produced more of the time in a group of individuals when a certain factor is present than when it is absent. Since causal connections are not determined in such a study, what the effect on any particular individual will be is unknown. By very carefully excluding or accounting for all extraneous causal factors, one can demonstrate, in this way, that some kind of a causal connection exists, but not *what* kind.

But exactly how does fluoridation work? Does it destroy the micro-organisms responsible for decay, does it prevent them from entering the teeth, does it make teeth more resistant to the acids they produce which cause decay? No one knows.

Furthermore, a statistical proof of a medicine's powers in one respect cannot insure that the medicine would cause no harm to a patient in another respect. Indeed, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under the recent leadership of Dr. James Goddard has restricted drug companies so tightly with red tape and regulations against precisely such a contingency that, despite the biggest outlay of funds for research and development in drug industry history up to that time, a smaller number of new prescription drugs reached the market in 1966 than in any previous year on record. The government set these standards for the drug industry to protect the public from potential Thalidomide-like drugs. It is unfortunate that they do not set nearly as high standards for themselves. (And drug companies do not enjoy a monopoly on the distribution and sale of their products as local

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governments virtually do with regard to water.)

It can be statistically shown that by pulling out the teeth of children in the six-to-fourteen age bracket, one would effect a drastic reduction in the incidence of tooth decay among them. But no sane man would dream of doing this, because he would realize that the reason why they had fewer cavities was that they had fewer teeth. Without the identification of the exact causal connection operating, one does not know what is really happening.

In order to run a statistical study, a quantitative measure of decay must be set up. For this purpose, scientists use the Decayed-Missing-Filled (DMF) rate, which usually represents the sum of the number of tooth surfaces decayed, the number of teeth missing, and the number of fillings from previous cavities. Since such a rate combines dissimilar things, seven cavities in one tooth which cause it to be pulled will give the same DMF rate as one cavity in another tooth. Teeth are sometimes missing for reasons other than decay (pyorrhea being the most striking example). Furthermore, dissimilar units of the same thing should never be equated, yet large cavities count the same as small ones, and if fluoridation should promote decay so that two little cavities merge into one big one, the DMF rate would go down! In other words, tooth decay is much more complex than this, and cannot be so simply measured to arrive at accurate results.

Many of the early statistical tests were done in naturally fluoridated areas. Under these conditions, many other factors could have controlled the decay rate. For instance, naturally fluoridated water is usually hard water, that is, it has many other dissolved chemicals in it, most notably calcium. It has been shown that ingesting fluoride in the presence of calcium reduces the harmful effects that the

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fluoride causes, such as tooth mottling. The explanation offered has been that fluoride alone is a very active agent which can displace other elements from living tissues upon deposition, but complexes with calcium, when present, to deposit out less disruptively. Thus calcium acts as a *natural* suppressor of the ill effects of fluoride, and is also an essential element in healthy tooth formation. But artificially fluoridated water does not have this safety feature, and so extrapolating the results of such studies to artificial fluoridation is a questionable procedure.

The medical ideas laying the foundation of fluoridation were originally proposed in the early 1930's by many investigators working independently. In 1931 it was discovered that mottling of tooth enamel (now termed "dental fluorosis"), known for at least one hundred years previously, was caused by the ingestion of fluoride, either from the water supply, or less likely, from food sources or the atmosphere. It was also noted that where mottling of teeth was endemic, there seemed to be a reduction in tooth decay among children.

This led many researchers to suggest a connection between fluoride and tooth-decay reduction. H. Trendley Dean, under the auspices of the newly formed National Institute of Health (a branch of the USPHS), was a pioneer investigator into this connection. His studies, and many more that followed, were presumably designed to determine the facts about water-borne fluoride and its effects on people. To obtain these facts, Dean chose as his object of study naturally fluoridated areas. At the time, some three million Americans were being exposed to naturally fluoridated water (and some were busy trying to defluoridate that water), and so they were the logical subjects for Dean's kind of study.

But what was Dean's kind of study? It was purely

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epidemiological. Various ADA reports tell us that by taking "extensive" surveys of 21 cities, some of which were "fortified" with fluoride and some of which were "fluoride-deficient," he "firmly established" that fluoride in the public water supply at 1 ppm levels resulted in a marked reduction in caries incidence, with only "very mild" mottling of teeth. Other investigators sponsored by the USPHS added that no undesirable side effects could be noted. Soon after these tests, pilot studies of artificial fluoridation at 1 ppm levels were started in 1944-1945 in three cities--Grand Rapids, Michigan; Newburgh, New York; and Brantford, Ontario--all of which have fluoridated water supplies to this day.

In practice, these early tests were a mockery of careful scientific investigation.

The first requirement for such tests would be to pick only those cities whose water fluoride content could be well established. But in nine of Dean's 21 cities, the fluoride content of the water varied greatly from year to year and place to place; thus any correlation between an unknown fluoride concentration and tooth decay became meaningless. All extraneous causal factors should have been accounted for. Yet many naturally fluoridated areas investigated had high calcium ion concentrations (30 to 70 ppm) which were ignored in evaluating results. Certainly, no findings should be brushed aside, whether they conflict with any predetermined notions one might have entertained or not. Yet when, in a preliminary report on the cities of Galesburg, Monmouth, Macomb, and Quincy, Dean's figures did not consistently bear out his fluoride-tooth decay hypothesis, he just dropped the two offending cities, and the Galesburg-Quincy "study" was hailed as a success.

Controls in scientific experiments are very important, for they help to pinpoint causes. When Grand

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Rapids started its fluoridation experiment, Muskegon was chosen as its control. Yet when it was noticed in 1951 that Muskegon's caries rate was declining along with Grand Rapids', its water supply was fluoridated too. The reason offered? So that Muskegon's children would no longer be deprived of the "great benefits" of fluoridation. Comparisons, now, were no longer possible.

Finally, if any ill effects of the fluoridation were brought out in these tests, they certainly should have been looked into further. But, though their own figures showed approximately twice as much periodontal disease, more osteosclerosis, more abnormalities in white blood cells, and three times the death rate in Bartlett, Texas (8 ppm fluoride), as compared to Cameron, Texas (0.4 ppm fluoride), the USPHS concluded from these tests that fluoride in the water supply had no medical effect other than dental fluorosis!

Attempts to prove the *safety* of fluoridation fared no better. For instance, a detailed study of mortality figures in 32 pairs of cities throughout the country was undertaken by Hagan and co-workers (published in *Public Health Reports*, May 1954). To begin with, the selection of cities was crude to say the least: from the scant analytical data available, one can conclude that the "non-fluoride" cities all had some fluoride; and some of them had *more* fluoride than some of the "fluoride" cities; and some of these, in turn, had less than 1 ppm fluoride, all of which was *natural* (calcium most likely present). Their selection of causes of death to tabulate, which was never justified, was also quite limited. The populations of some of the cities they chose changed so much during a span of just ten years before the statistics were obtained (1949-1950), that any effect of fluoride on mortality, other than causing death within a few years of consumption, would have gone

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unnoticed. Even when the populations did not change much numerically, the fact that no allowance was made for the constant influx and outflux of residents in most American cities would leave the results in serious doubt. To make matters still worse, hardly any city had all its sources of water thoroughly analyzed, and in almost every city, this supply had been changed or modified more than once in the course of the previous thirty years, making the actual fluoride intake of the residents a virtual unknown. After they averaged everything out, the net result (as one might have anticipated) was that no significant difference existed between mortality rates in the two types of cities. Yet when one looks at the death rates in *each pair* of cities tabulated, one sees very large differences, in both directions, between fluoridated and non-fluoridated death rates. These large differences are never mentioned nor accounted for in the report.

During the 1940's, research funds were being granted at an accelerating rate for the study of fluoridation. The experiments completed were being lauded as "spectacular successes." In 1948, Dean was appointed head of the newly formed Dental Health branch of the USPHS. Some scientists who formerly had reported experiments unfavorable to fluoridation were now revising their results on the basis of reinvestigations. Others, like Dr. Hans Borei, who was one of the foremost investigators in the world on fluoride's effect on enzyme activity, discontinued their work on fluoride altogether. Promoters of fluoridation were convincing local officials of small communities to adopt the measure without a vote.

Meanwhile, other health officials, who were not so optimistic, were looking into other applications of fluoride for dental health, and believed that they had found an alternative. It was shown that topical application of concentrated sodium fluoride solutions

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to teeth several times a year in childhood produced nearly as much of a reduction in tooth decay as did fluoridation (this method is still used today by many dentists), but with the following added benefits: 1) If care was taken to prevent any ingestion of fluoride, there was no danger of adverse physiological side effects. 2) The therapy was selective, so that only children who would be helped received it. And 3) it was voluntary. It is now generally agreed upon by investigators that the decay-inhibiting properties of fluoridated water after the age of five (when most of the permanent teeth have been calcified) occurs mainly through a surface effect, even though the fluoride is at 1 ppm concentration! In other words, fluoridated water need not be consumed, just swished and spat out, to produce a decay-inhibiting effect in early adolescence. After adolescence, it now appears that topical application of fluoride is *more* effective in combating decay than fluoridation.

Suddenly, in 1950, the previous resistance of many individuals and organizations to fluoridation broke down, and it was endorsed by such groups as the USPHS, the American Dental Association (ADA), and the American Public Health Association. This endorsement occurred despite the fact that the 1944 tests were scheduled to run for ten to fifteen years, due to the long time interval between fluoride intake and the appearance of such adverse reactions as dental fluorosis. By 1956, the date by which the 1944 tests would have begun to take on some medical significance, 27,000,000 Americans were already drinking water that was artificially fluoridated.

During the 1950's a problem arose that had not been anticipated. It was called "drop out." It seemed that though the water engineers were putting 1 ppm of fluoride into the water supply at the water

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stations, water with less fluoride was coming out of the faucets served by these stations. The fluoride had the unusual property of being trapped by the rust deposits present in the water mains (which is the principle behind water defluoridators used today by manufacturers) and of building up to dangerous concentrations there. What would prevent these deposits from one day breaking up--dropping out, as it was called--and finding their way to the consumer who would then surely be poisoned? Since many water engineers had no answer to this question, fluoridation was stopped in many cities soon after it was begun. Apparently, this problem is no longer present; or at least it is not referred to any more by the water engineers.

Local governments were sued many times for their initiation of fluoridation. Opponents claimed that fluoridation set a new and dangerous precedent of forced mass medication for the prevention of a non-communicable disease. The governments replied by using the same basic arguments that got government into the public health field to begin with. They even went so far as to claim that dental caries is a communicable disease, because it is caused by bacteria!

Today in America, some 70,000,000 people are drinking water containing 1 ppm of fluoride, some or all of which was added artificially. Due to the vast quantities of water used in this country (most of which is never consumed internally anyway), fluoridation machines and chemicals have become big business. Out of every $10,000 spent for fluoridation, less than $5 goes for the intended purpose of providing every child under ten with a quart of fluoridated water a day. Since the early experiments, hundreds more have been carried out. The list of famous groups and individuals giving testimonials to fluoridation seems endless.

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Recently, fluoridationists have claimed new, heretofore unknown benefits derivable from fluoridation. Now, it seems, fluoridation reduces periodontal disease and malocclusions that result from loss of teeth, improves the crystalline structure of *all* bone tissues, reduces the effects of osteoporosis, loss of hearing, and hardening of the arteries in the elderly, and, to top it all off, mottles teeth so that they are more esthetically desirable (none of these claims has been adequately substantiated). For instance, in 1966, the ADA happily announced the results of some experiments which suggested that fluoridation brings about a "striking" reduction in hardening of the arteries in elderly people.

This means that the ADA now admits that fluoride at 1 ppm concentration can have a "striking" effect on areas of the body other than the teeth. But through the years they have consistently maintained just the opposite: that a 1 ppm--or even a 2 to 8 ppm--concentration in the public's water supply is so low a dosage as to have no other effect than reducing tooth decay, and, in a few rare cases, mottling teeth. Well, if they just discovered in 1966, after having endorsed the program for sixteen years, an effect of fluoridation previously unknown, what other effects, unknown or unrecognized, have they yet to discover?

In a future issue, the medical evidence which already exists as to the effect of fluoride on the human body will be examined in some detail.

--David Solan

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REVIEWS

The Forgotten Hero

George Mason: Reluctant Statesman
by Robert Rutland, Dominion Books
(a division of the University Press
of Virginia), Charlottesville, 1963

> . . . That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

These ideas sound familiar to people all over the world; in fact, one might guess that they were part of an early draft of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

Few Americans today know that Jefferson was anticipated by and undoubtedly influenced by a man whom he described as a statesman "of the first order of wisdom among those who acted on the theatre of the Revolution." That man was his friend, George Mason (1725-1792), a fellow Virginian who played a major role in forging the shape of the early American republic.

George Mason's pen was the first in America to give constitutional status to the principles that rights are inherent in every man, not the gift of government, and that the purpose of government is to pro-

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tect these rights, not to destroy them. Our federal Bill of Rights and the various state bills of rights were modeled after Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights (quoted above). It was adopted in the Virginia Assembly in June, 1776, one month before the Declaration of Independence was adopted in Philadelphia by the Continental Congress. In his Declaration, Mason stated that all men possess the rights to life, liberty, property, trial by jury, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom from search and seizure. Mason's Declaration was mailed to Sam Adams at the Congress in Philadelphia and he called it "a feast to our little circle." (p. 65)

Robert Rutland brings Mason to life again in his colorful, exciting biography, *George Mason: Reluctant Statesman*, an intimate portrait that reads like fiction. Rutland presents a detailed picture of an intelligent, energetic, self-taught man. In addition, he gives the reader a well-rounded picture of the times and a tingling sense of the drama and suspense that mounted in colonial America from 1763 to 1776.

Rutland's story begins with the death of Mason's father when George was nine years old. Mason grew up on an estate next to George Washington's Mount Vernon where he enjoyed all the benefits of the life of a country gentleman. His uncle, a well-known lawyer, was his unofficial guardian, and his education began in his uncle's library, one of the best in Virginia. He was unable to attend college because he was responsible for managing his family's plantation when he reached maturity.

In the years prior to the Revolution Mason married and devoted himself to the construction of his home and the maintenance of a 5,000 acre estate without the assistance of a bookkeeper or overseer. At the

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same time he was gradually developing himself as a self-taught expert in the history and science of government and politics, as well as a self-taught lawyer who was considered (by lawyers and laymen alike) to be one of Virginia's leading authorities on land laws. (His land holdings extended to 75,000 acres and he was a member and treasurer of the Ohio Company.)

When colonial relations with Great Britain became most strained in the decade prior to the Revolution, George Mason was reluctant to be active in political office. Mr. Rutland outlined many of the reasons: His business and family responsibilities were heavy (he became a widower with nine children in 1773); his temperament was retiring and quiet; he preferred reading and study to political life. But most of all, perhaps, throughout his entire adult life he had a painful and sometimes crippling illness, gout, which made traveling by coach and horseback an unbearable ordeal. In spite of all of this, however, Mason entered political life because he believed it was the only way he could make his home and family free from oppression.

The major portion of Rutland's story deals with Mason's political career and achievements. Mason may have been a "reluctant statesman," but the list of his achievements staggers the imagination when one remembers that he suffered from a painful illness. In addition to all of his domestic and business concerns, he served as a local justice of the peace, as a trustee for the town of Alexandria, as an officer in the local militia, and as a member of the Virginia legislature from time to time where he was responsible for drafting numerous bills. For example, Mason wrote the Fairfax Resolves which Washington introduced to the Virginia Assembly in 1774. They advocated a boycott on English goods and the calling of a congress of the colonies so

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that they could unite to protect themselves. These Resolves became the basis for the influential Resolves of the Continental Congress in October of the same year.

His activities reached their pinnacle in 1776: He wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights, and at the same session of the Virginia Assembly he was the chief author of the Virginia Constitution, which later influenced both the federal and state constitutions of America because it established the principle of separation of powers as a safeguard against tyranny. In the same year he was also the only layman invited to help leading legal authorities devise a new court system and revise the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

As Mr. Rutland states, "George Mason was one of the generals in the intellectual leadership of Revolution." (p. 107) Much of his influence was behind the scenes, however. For example, he was George Washington's mentor and wrote many of the state papers, resolutions and bills that Washington sponsored at the Virginia House of Burgesses. Patriots from Virginia and other colonies frequently sought his advice and intellectual leadership.

The climax of Mason's political career was also the climax of the revolutionary period--the Philadelphia Convention in 1787 which met to find a solution for the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation, and ended by writing the Constitution of the United States. Mason was a delegate and played a major role in the debates from which the Constitution of the new republic was created. When the debates were finished and delegates awaited their turn to sign the new Constitution, George Mason, who had devoted a lifetime to study and effort in the pursuit of freedom, was one of the few who refused to sign. To explain his action, Mason later said, ". . . I would not forfeit

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the approbation of my mind for the approbation of any man, or all the men upon earth." (p. 103) It was a matter of integrity to George Mason; he would not sign a document which contradicted his own best judgment of the concrete form that he thought the ideal government should take. He feared that the defects in the United States Constitution would lead to the infringements of rights and the loss of freedom. His objections were as follows:

1) In general, Mason criticized the document because he thought the wording was too loose and the meaning too general, which he considered a threat to liberty.

2) Mason was adamant in his insistence that the Constitition should have a bill of rights (the first ten amendments were not added until after ratification). In particular, he was afraid that rights might be infringed because there was no provision for a jury system, for freedom of religion and for freedom of the press, which he considered "one of the great bulwarks of liberty." Rutland explains Mason's position, "If the trusteeship of man's rights was to be more federal than local then there must be guarantees of their safety. These guarantees could not be left as unwritten, unrecorded assurances. . . . He wanted it down in writing." (p. 109)

3) One of Mason's main reasons for not signing the Constitution was that it contained a central contradiction. It sanctioned slavery and the slave trade which Mason considered an inhuman device contradictory to the philosophy of equality and rights. He stated that it would inevitably lead to "national calamities." He, like Jefferson, believed that the gradual abolition of slavery should be enacted immediately. (Mason was disgusted by the compromise and bargaining on the issues of

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slavery and commerce: Northern delegates traded silence on the slavery issue for support of the interstate commerce clause.)

4) Mason objected to the fact that the Constitution allowed Congress to pass laws which regulated commerce with only a simple majority vote. Mason argued that a two-thirds majority was required to prevent injustices. In particular, he feared that Northern commercial interests would benefit at the expense of the South.

5) The Constitution provided for taxation by the federal government, which Mason was convinced would destroy state governments. At the time of the Articles of Confederation, Mason "foresaw one tax leading to another, then to the creation of an agency to enforce collection. . . . Put the purse and the sword in the same hand, he said, and you would see an end to liberty." (pp. 76-77)

6) Mason feared that the federal judiciary would destroy state courts and make legal action "'tedious intricate & expensive. . . enabling the rich to oppress & ruin the poor.'" (p. 91) He was even more convinced of this after the Judiciary Act of 1789. Mason thought that the federal judiciary ought to be confined to subjects that were strictly federal.

7) Mason objected to the fact that the Constitution would permit standing armies in peacetime.

8) Mason felt that the Constitution opened the door to future oppression because it lacked provision for a council appointed to advise the President. He feared that the President might become a "tool of the Senate" or of a cabinet that might "be induced to join in any dangerous or oppressive measures, to shelter themselves, and prevent an inquiry into their own misconduct in office." (p. 91)

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Mason was not alone in his attempt to block ratification of the Constitution. In the Virginia Assembly Richard Henry Lee, Patrick Henry, William Grayson and others (called Antifederalists) argued along with him. Tempers flared in bitter dispute and the Federalists (led by Madison and Edmund Pendleton) directed their attacks against Mason in particular, charging, among other things, that his mental powers were failing because of his advanced age. Though unprovable, there is a story that Mason once replied to a Federalist sympathizer, "Sir, when yours fails nobody will ever discover it." (P. 94)

The Henry-Mason Antifederalists were defeated by only ten votes. It was a battle that lost Mason many of his old friends, at least until time healed the wounds. George Washington was particularly upset by Mason's obstructive tactics because he was afraid that the general populace would be alarmed. Jefferson, however, remained a loyal friend even though he disagreed with Mason.

In the final years before his death Mason renewed his old friendships and seemed to be more content with the new government, even though he still maintained his initial position for the most part. Mason was invited to be one of Virginia's earliest senators, but by this time age and gout made him more reluctant than ever to hold office.

Rutland's summary of Mason's philosophy which caused him to oppose the Constitution is eloquent. He states that it rested on Mason's conviction that an individual knows best where his own self-interest lies. "Start with man himself, Mason might have put it. The best agent of a man's personal rights is himself. The next best is the community of interests of which he is a member. To it he delivers, by proxy of his vote, certain of his rights to be more effec-

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tively enjoyed in common with other men, as, for example, the protection of his property. But the greater the distance between a man and the control of his rights the more likely are they to invite infringement. This position was at the root of Mason's objections to the Constitution. A man's liberty needs more vigilant guardians than do his lands and chattels." (pp. 108-109)

George Mason was devoted to the fundamental principles of liberty, reluctant to compromise his own best judgment of how these ideals should be put into practice. His integrity eventually made him a dissenter and an opponent of Washington, Madison and other old and dear friends. In particular, he defended "local, state, and regional interests against the trading of too much liberty for too much authority." (p. 109) Rutland contends that he "developed a shortsightedness about national affairs" that "denied him a much larger place in national affairs and a more conspicuous role in our history." (p. 78) On the contrary, American history has proved that Mason was more farsighted than many of his contemporaries; and the irony is that Mason's name has been buried in history books.

It is to his credit that he put his finger on most of the areas in the Constitution where the greatest abuses to liberty eventually would develop. He foresaw that rights would be infringed and he was right, because he thought in principle.

Nevertheless, Mason couldn't possibly have predicted, in the eighteenth century, the extent to which political and economic liberty have been lost in America. He feared that America might turn into an oppressive aristocracy; instead, we have an oppressive bureaucracy. He considered property sacrosanct; he couldn't have dreamed of the extent to which the Constitution's loose wording and the commerce and taxing powers of

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the federal government have made private property more of a political catchword than an inalienable right today. Nor, in face of the widespread assumption that property rights are relative, would Mason's suggested two-thirds majority to pass commerce laws have prevented these laws from passing. Mason preferred local militias to standing armies; he would be appalled by the national draft system.

American history might have been different had Mason been able to convince his fellow patriots that the flaws in the Constitution would undermine its basic intentions. But despite these flaws, which Mason was often correct in pointing to, the Constitution was a monumental document that made the philosophy of man's rights a reality and gave hope to people all over the world.

In Article XVII of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, Mason had written: ". . . no free government or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, . . . and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles." Rights and liberty have been gradually eroded because we have not made "frequent recurrence" to basic principles.

It is regrettable that Mason's story never became part of the popular folklore of the Revolutionary period, because he was one of America's most influential spokesmen for these principles--the political philosophy of rights and limited government. In the early days of the Republic, it is understandable that a dissenter would be overshadowed by the champions of the Constitution. And today, unfortunately, it is not surprising that Mason has remained relatively obscure. Modern historians and political theorists would hardly go out of their way to publicize a forgotten hero who championed principles

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that they do not think exist, who prophesied disasters that they would like to consider as progress, and who stood for a level of argument and of dissent that no longer exists in American politics today.

--Joyce F. Jones

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